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cial necessity that the work be done under conditions which make the other two possible."

JULIUS H. PARMELEE.

Washington, D. C.

Cost of Living in American Towns. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade. Cd. 5609. (London: Wyman and Sons. 1911. Pp. xcii, 533. 5s. 1d.)

The present report, dealing with the conditions of working classes in twenty-eight industrial towns of the United States east of the Mississippi River, is the fifth of a series undertaken by the English Board of Trade. It treats of the wages and hours of labor in the building, engineering, and printing trades, retail prices of food, rents and housing conditions of working-class families and their expenditures for food. The object of the investigation was to secure a collection of data comparable with those already obtained for the United Kingdom. The date of the United States inquiry, February, 1909, differs from that of the other inquiries, namely, October, 1905, and so, in making comparisons, allowance has been made for the two or three per cent increase of prices and wages in the United Kingdom during the interval. The wage data, which were collected mainly from individual employers, consist of the *predominant* earnings or range of earnings for a full ordinary week without overtime. Data concerning rents were obtained from real estate agents and from tenants. The retail prices *most usually* paid by wage-earning families for a variety of commodities were obtained from representative dealers. Detailed budgets, classified according to nationality, were collected from over seven thousand families. Of the budgets the three thousand obtained from white families of American or British parentage were selected for detailed comparison with the United Kingdom budgets. All of the data are presented in the form of index numbers according to the familiar Board of Trade method, the figures for New York being represented by one hundred in each case. The conditions in each city are described in detail.

The reports of the Board of Trade offer the best material available for international comparisons of working-class rents, wages, and retail prices, even though the field of industry covered by the investigation is limited to three trades. This is the only instance known to the reviewer in which extensive data have been collected

in a number of countries by a single bureau for the express purpose of comparing conditions in those countries. Although the objection may be made that the trades selected make a comparison too favorable to the United States, yet it does not seem that the margin of error can be more than five or ten per cent. The comparison of weekly wages of the building, engineering, and printing trades in England and Wales and in the United States shows that the wage level in the latter country is to the wage level in the former country as 230:100. As to hourly earnings in the building trades, the ratio is 273:100; in the printing trades it is 258:100; while in the engineering trades it falls to 198:100.

In regard to housing and rents legitimate comparison is difficult because the housing conditions are so varied. However, the conclusion is stated, "that for practical purposes the ratio of 270:100 may be taken as representing with approximate accuracy the level of rents paid by the working classes in the United States and in England and Wales, respectively."

The similarities in the expenditures for food of "American-British" families and those of the United Kingdom are more striking than the differences. The main difference between expenditures of families in the United States and in the United Kingdom are that the former buy more potatoes and less bread; less cheese but more fruits, vegetables and eggs. If the articles of food as specified in the average American budget are taken at the predominant American prices, and then at the predominant British prices, the ratio between the two is 125:100. If the articles specified by the average British budget are taken at the two sets of prices the ratio is 138:100. From the British point of view, then, American prices are thirty-eight per cent higher.

The real difficulty in the comparison of budgets comes from the different range of income with the consequent different percentages of income spent for food in the two countries. The percentage of income spent on food by the various classes ranges from 67.35 to 57.01 in the United Kingdom, and from 51.39 to 28.40 in the United States. The Board of Trade has, therefore, selected the following classes of families for comparison: (1) families in which the total family income is approximately the same; (2) families in which the total amount spent on food is approximately the same; (3) families spending approximately the same amount on food, allowance being made for the differences between the retail prices of the United States and England

and Wales. The conclusion from the comparison of budgets of similar classes is that "the dietary of the average American family is more varied and more liberal than that of families that as nearly as possible correspond with them in the United Kingdom." The food bill takes a more subordinate place in the American than in the British working-class budget. In regard to clothes, it appears that higher prices have to be paid in the United States than in the United Kingdom for woolen and worsted fabrics of a similar quality. However, the most noteworthy fact is the practice common in the United States of buying clothes that are expected to last for a single season and not for two or more seasons as is common in the United Kingdom. The analysis shows that "the cost of food and rent combined (allotting weights of four and one respectively, these weights being derived from the British budgets) would have been but fifty-two per cent greater in the United States than in England and Wales; but these heavier relative charges on working-class income have been accompanied by weekly wages in American towns as indicated by the three trade groups—building, engineering, and printing—which are as 230:100." Real wages are, then, about one half more in the United States than in the United Kingdom.

The data upon which the report is based seem to have been carefully collected and the manner of working up the data is excellently suited to the object of the investigation.

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The Standard of Living among the Industrial People of the United States. By FRANK HATCH STREIGHTOFF. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. 1911. Pp. xix, 196. \$1.00.)

Much information concerning the standard of living is accessible in labor reports, monographs, and periodical literature; and to gather this scattered material and present the essential facts in condensed form has been Mr. Streightoff's task. The survey is confined to the situation in this country and in recent years, but within this field the author has exercised praiseworthy diligence in the search for material. He has not only utilized the publications of the Census Bureau and the United States Bureau of Labor, but he has rescued scattered data from the oblivion of state labor reports and drawn upon contributions to the knowl-